

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

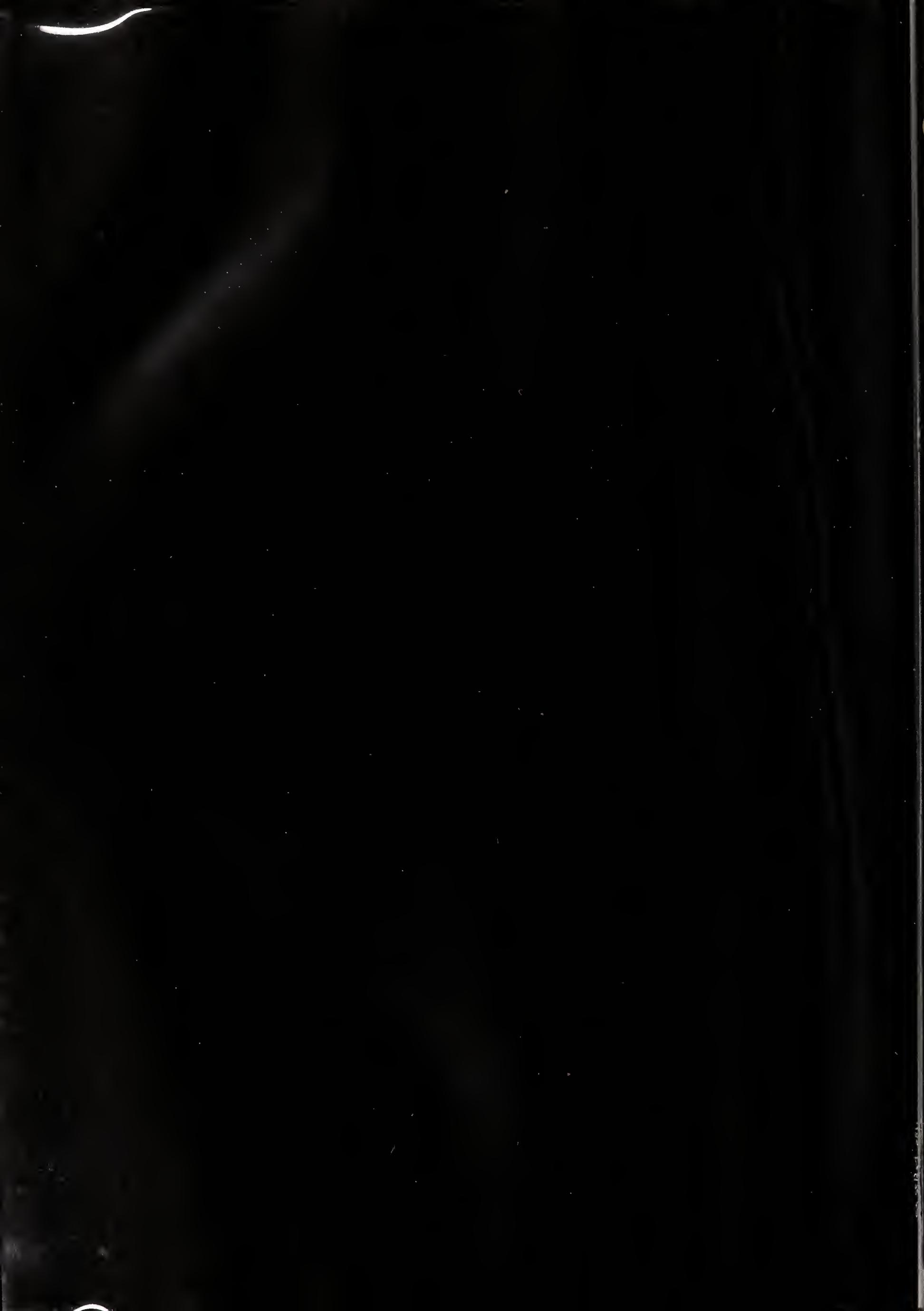
MR. & MRS. H. DOERR

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Interviewers

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NOVEMBER 3, 1973

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Ed Buske

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Interviewee

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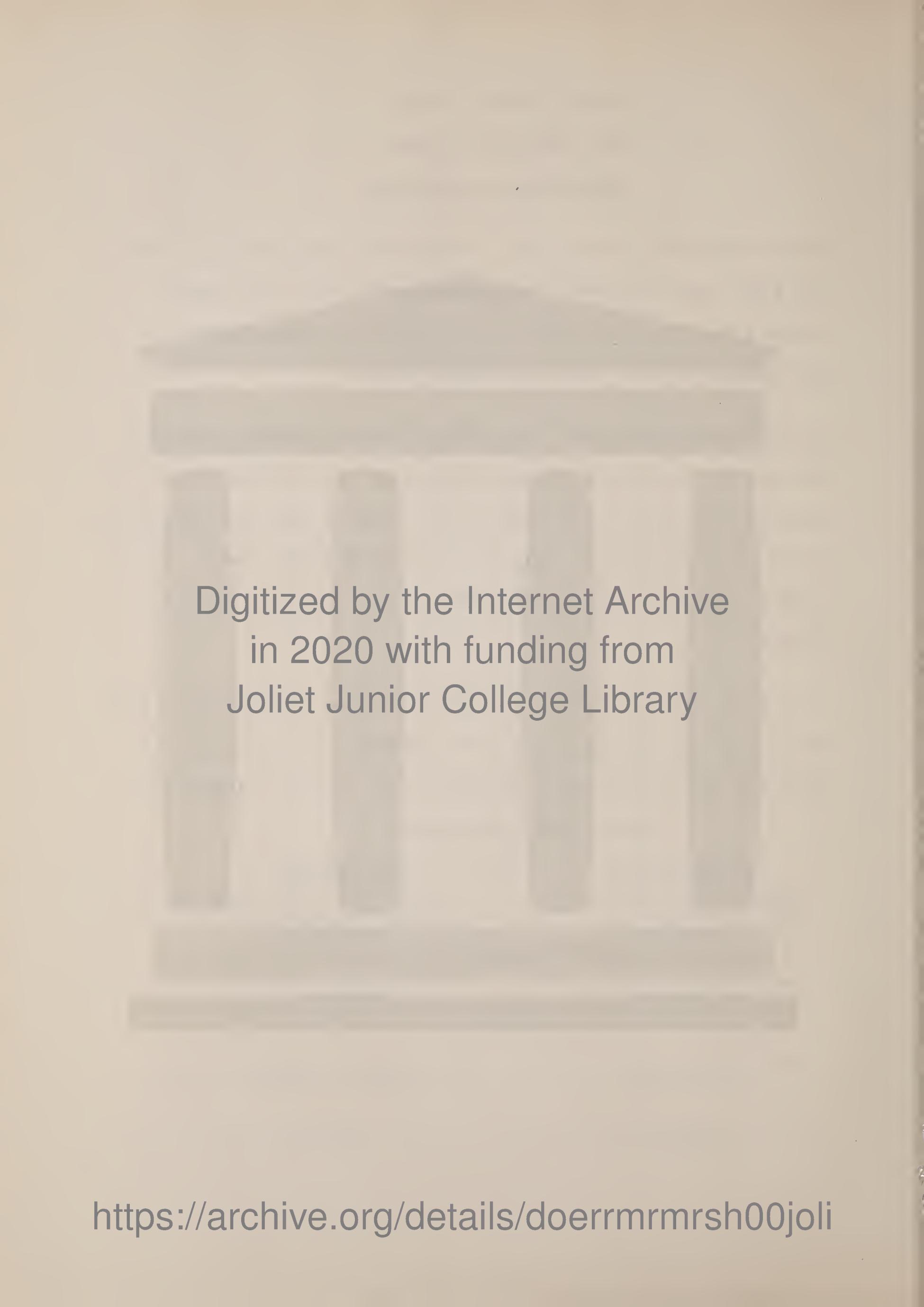
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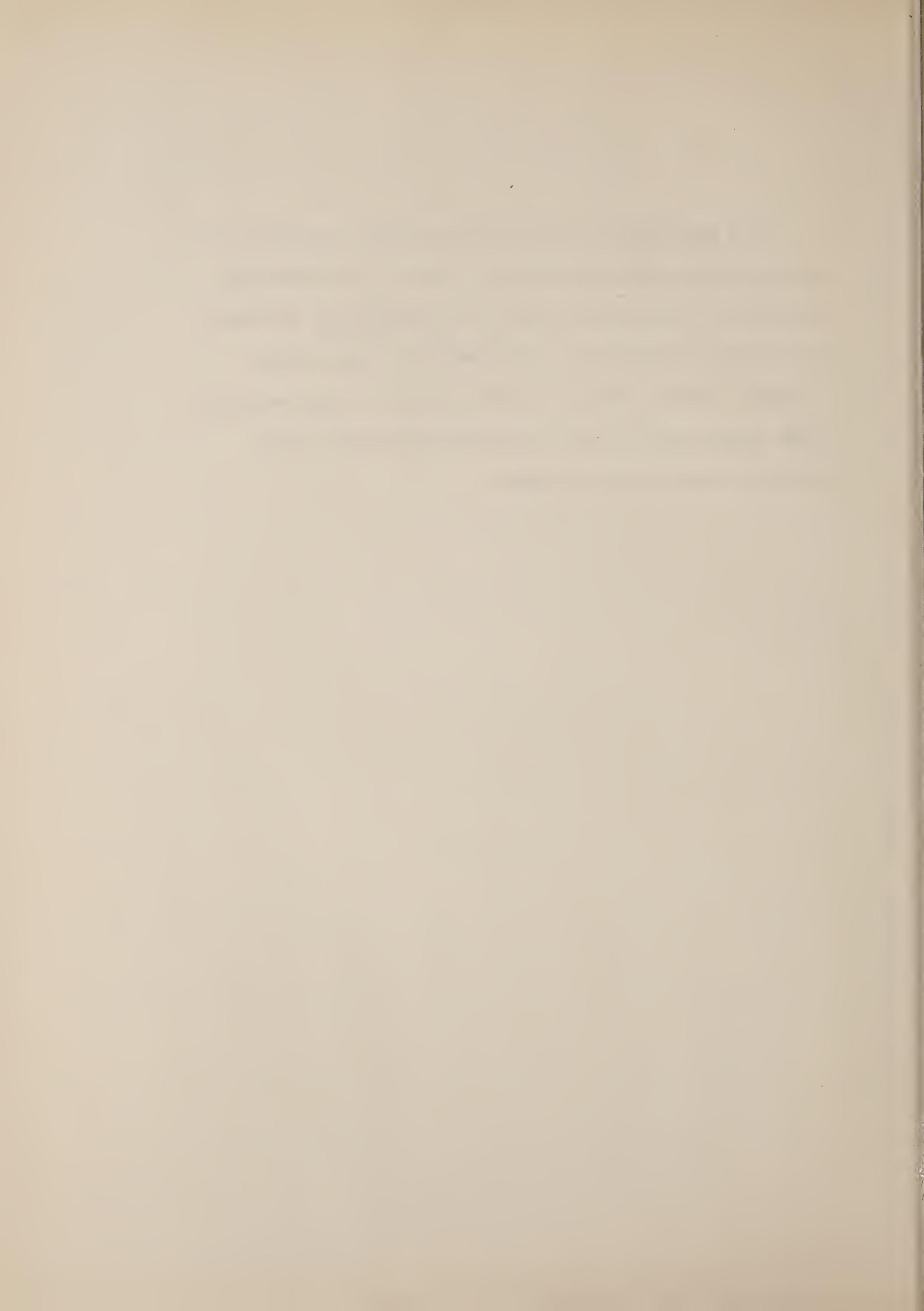


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INTERVIEWEES: MR. HAROLD DOERR AND MRS DELLA DOERR

INTERVIEWER: ED BRUSKE

D. DOERR: That Plainfield is an older town; before Chicago had one home in it, Plainfield is a going village. It had I don't know whether the town house, the tavern was there now if it still stands, which we used as a weigh station for travelers by coach through to the west. Plainfield was the origin of material that was used in Chicago to build their own homes. Chicago is built on a flat surface where there are very few forests anywhere near the location of the city itself. So wood had to be produced, brought in from outside and Plainfield was one great source for that wood used in construction of the first homes in Chicago.

BRUSKE: Are we talking before the fire in Chicago or after that?

D. DOERR: Oh, this was the origin. Remember, this was just prairie, complete prairie. Nothing there, no buildings, no anything. It was blank. Why they wanted to build it there, unless it was because of the...

H. DOERR: Well, Fort Dearborne was there and that was the original reason for locating Chicago, for protection against the Indians.

BRUSKE: You had two waterways there also.

D. DOERR: Yes, the river and the lake. Of course, later on that river was reversed to run into the lake rather than down this direction.

H. DOERR: In the beginning Chicago wasn't very desirable because it was mostly swamp land. However, after the fire, they raised the grade of the

city downtown at least ten feet and this made a big difference because then they had better drainage and more suitable building conditions than they had originally. So this had some effect on the early development. My father lived in Chicago during the great fire and he was on the north side, I guess; and he had to run across the bridge to get away from the fire.

D. DOERR: He was on the south side and had to run to the north side.

H. DOERR: Well, I know it was from one side to the other.

D. DOERR: Well, the south side is where the fire started. Then he had to go across the bridge to get away from the fire. That destroyed the whole city.

BRUSKE: Did he relate that experience?

H. DOERR: Oh yes, he told me about it.

BRUSKE: What were his reactions?

D. DOERR: Well, like almost anyone's...

H. DOERR: The people were destitute. They lost their homes and their possessions. They just had to live on charity till they could get back on their feet, get a job, and get reorganized. There was terrific hardship and they had problems, such as water supply and all the basic necessities of life. I don't believe he was married at that time, but he got married later on.

D. DOERR: He was an architect and his father was an architect, in Chicago. The interesting thing was the difficulty of building in the

downtown area in Chicago, as he said they raised the level of the land, the grade of the land; but then, as the buildings began to get larger, to build an adequate foundation, I think that might be of great interest that they have had to, through the years, develop a system for making a sound foundation for those buildings. Otherwise, they would not be stable; they would sink and crack and all that sort of thing. It has been quite a development, but as far as you are concerned, and your interest in far early start the fact that Plainfield was a going village and well populated, I don't know how large, but at least big enough. That tavern is pretty good sized, isn't it? The stage house there in Plainfield, do you know it?

BRUSKE: The one across from Enterprize Printing there?

D. DOERR: No. The one I mean is across from the filling station. I think by the house with all the windows. That's where the stagecoach used to be. That was the old tavern between Chicago and Plainfield.

BRUSKE: That was later.

D. DOERR: Well, yes. It was later. Chicago was already a going community at that time; but before Chicago was a going community, naturally there was travel through Plainfield. How Plainfield happened to be located there, who knows.

BRUSKE: Well, there was from what I understand a Wells Fargo line that came through Richton Park anyway, which is an old community east of Joliet, out towards Chicago Heights; and there are buildings there that are also stage-coach lines. Maybe it was part of that.

D. DOERR: Yes, there must have been. Of course, this land being flat, travels simple through this area by comparison, and there were not terrifically heavy forests. Along the rivers, yes; but there was more meadow type land which is traversible with horses and wagons and that sort of thing. So it didn't have the interference that many other areas did have for communications, and for all that sort of thing. Now, as far as life went, when I was small, we were out in the country and in this day due to the fact that many of the immigrants who dug the Illinois and Michigan Canal took advantage of this raw country and bought land, then later, after the canal was finished, settled on that land and it just happened that my father had purchased a quarter of a section in the midst of this, not knowing that all his neighbors would be these uneducated, Irish laborers.

BRUSKE: Did you have any ideas about his feelings about these people?

D. DOERR: Well, he accepted them because they were humans, and they were honest, and they were kindly; but, they were not interested in anything more than survival. They weren't interested in education or culture. My father was interested in music, and in literature, and current events. He was right up on them. As soon as there was any rural mail delivery, which was from quite a long while, he always had a Chicago paper, which was completely unknown in that area. Well, when his family came along and they did have a school developed, then these Irish immigrants, the children, had the dialect of Ireland and this ungrammatical type of speech. He couldn't have his children pick that up. In fact, his one daughter was one of the ones who was quickest to pick up all of this

jargon. Emily, the oldest sister, oldest daughter of the family, could keep her own identity and her own speech; but, his daughter Clara just came home just as she could have been one of the immigrants. So, he arranged that he would have a home in town and have the advantages of better education.

BRUSKE: Okay. Are you saying that in Joliet he had another house, besides the farm you lived on in Joliet?

D. DOERR: Yes. They carried on two homes. My mother would be in town taking care of the family through the week; he would arrange to take himself to the farm. We would go back to the farm and get things set for him. It was a great sacrifice for my father. Life must have been terribly difficult because he would work from four in the morning until late at night taking care of himself and the home, and the farm land. But, he did that as a sacrifice for his children so that they could be well educated. It was a must as far as he was concerned, and it was never done with resentment at all. It was quite a different life. I was neither town folk nor country folk, but I enjoyed both. The advantages of the education in town and the country life. I love the country life. The horses. I love all aspects of the growing things. The country life wasn't much less advantageous than the town life, that is, in most of the homes. The water supply in those outlying homes, that is, there was running water I'm sure in the better homes and in the downtown area of Joliet, but in the outlying homes there was no running water. There was outside toilet, there was pumps, there were all the crude elements of living and the farm life was identical so we didn't have a feeling of it

being inferior in any way. In fact, it was superior because our well was deeper in the farm having the windmill, and the deep, deep well. That well was 160 feet deep, which was quite unusual. Now there's another instance of my father's insistence on going for deep water rather than the shallow dug wells which so many people used.

BRUSKE: Did he have trouble with the rock? I know that the land around here is...

D. DOERR: Well, there was rock there. There were limestone quarries right within a quarter of a mile of our land. Yes, they might break through rock, but they went down there and they got that water. At one level it was sulfur water, which to us was not undesirable. We got accustomed to it; it was not undesirable. Later on I think, they raised the level of that and came up to another level and got the other water. In fact, one layer down there when they dug, drilled a well down in one part of the farm, they struck oil and gas. But, it was never developed to usable quantities. It is an interesting thing to know much lies below our country. The life on the farm was, and in town both, people depended upon their gardens. They nearly all had their own fruit trees on their yard. They had small gardens because the stores at that time didn't carry produce to any extent whatsoever. A few potatoes and the dried vegetables, onions, things like that. Sugar and flour, very staple food. If you went into a store, you didn't see 99 varieties of cereal. You might find rolled oats, and flour, and the whole wheat flour, that sort of thing. Sugar, yes. We weren't quite as primitive as Northern Canada where we saw stores having barrels of molasses for the only

sweetening they had. We were not quite as primitive as that.

BRUSKE: When were you in Canada?

D. DOERR: Oh, this was about thirty years ago. We went up pretty far north. We were not far from Hudson Bay. I mean more than half way up to Hudson Bay. So we were in the French area. There the old stores could have been the early, very early, American stores as far as their supplies and equipment were concerned. Of course, by the time I knew anything about anything the stores were still quite small and quite scantily provided with things; and it simplified shopping very much. You just bought a few staples and you were through and you had your coffee, your tea, salt, flour, and staple things. Then a little later, of course, they had canned meats, particularly salmon was very much. And some few canned tomatoes and things, but very few canned vegetables.

BRUSKE: Early 1900's then?

D. DOERR: Yes, very early 1900's then.

BRUSKE: What were the prices like?

D. DOERR: Oh, the prices were just unbelievable. Even after we were married in 1915 the bread was only 5¢ a loaf. Other prices in accord. Of course, wages were very low, too. If a person made a hundred dollars a month, they were doing very well. Weren't they, dear?

H. DOERR: Twenty dollars a week was my starting pay after I graduated from college.

D. DOERR: That wasn't the lowest pay. That was for a college graduate, twenty dollars a week.

BRUSKE: What kind of an income was the farm bringing in? Was he selling to marketers?

D. DOERR: Oh, yes. There was a grain elevator there even at that time. By that time, when we were growing up, there was a railroad going through. At the time my father was born or in his early days, which was way back in 1940, and when he lived in Ohio, 1840, excuse me, the railroads were just starting to be built. In fact, he went miles to see the first train go through on that railroad. But later on, when we lived there on the farm, I should say between 1900 and from then on had the farm and the town house, there was a railroad by the elevator that took care of the grain. How much they cut with the grain, that I was never told and never bothered.

H. DOERR: He was able to be self-sufficient and self-insured. He raised seven children and put them all through high school and some through college.

D. DOERR: He paid for his land. I can barely remember when that mortgage was burned, which must have been in the early 1900's. He was a very hard worker. All the work was done with just horses. The equipment, when you cultivated corn, you cultivated one row at a time with two horses. It took a long, long time. On our farm, the first binder which was the reaper, the old McCormick reaper, the very first McCormick reaper was used on that farm of that whole community. Before that, they had cut the grain with scythes and they cut the hay with scythes for years. Later

on they got the machinery to cut it with, which cut the four-, five-foot swath; and before they had the binders, they had to go along and cut it with this machine and then they had to go along and pick it up and bind it. Tie it not with string, but how did they do it? They took clumps of the oats and made a knot at the top and put the two lengths around a group of oats and tied it again and made a bundle of oats. Have you known about that?

BRUSKE: I imagined that that's what you were going to say. But, what was the purpose of doing it that way?

D. DOERR: They had no string and it would have cost money to have string. The grain was cheaper. That was their method of collecting it. They didn't have thrashing machines in those early, early days and the grain itself was stacked in stacks in such a way that the grain heads were protected from being waterlogged, being soaked with water and spoiling and then they could feed them just as stalks of grain to the animals. It didn't have to be thrashed out as grain. Later on the thrashing machines came into being and after the binders and all this developed very slowly. The binders came and that, of course, had to use the binder twine which is still available today although not very much of it. Then the grain was bound with this cord and then shocked in shocks on the field and then the men would come out with their hayracks and load up these and take them into the thrashing machine which came around with a great lumbering coal burning engine.

BRUSKE: The steam engine?

D. DOERR: The steam engine and a great big cumbersome separator to thrash out the. . . that's why it was called thrashing because the way of separating the grains and the stalks. It was a beater. These little beaters came on it. Your grain went in and the cord was slashed, and the grain went through there and was beaten , and then they separated the grain from the straw, and in that way it was a very great advance, of course, over the old technique of doing things. The corn was all husked by hand. Did they do two rows at a time? I think they did. They had a great big wagon that had a backboard on it so when they threw the corn, it would go down into the wagon and not over the top. You can probably see a few of those still today.

H. DOERR: I think you should tell about Byron being the engineer of the thrashing machine.

D. DOERR: My brother Byron was better educated than most--had the advantage of more education and more background due to my father's attitude toward learning; and he became one of the experts, but only by practice and observation and trying this and trying that. He also had one of the first automobiles in the country and that was in 1909, I'm sure. It was very rare. I might say that the roads at that time were so different from the roads today that a person would hardly recognize them. Even your back country roads are not like those at all because we not only had single lane gravel roads to drive on which you had on your better roads, but always you had a side road besides of just dirt so that the horses which were not shod could go on this earth and not have their feet worn to ribbons. It was a very different type of life because it was slow. I wouldn't say it was leisurely because you had to put in so many more

hours for the work, but the food you ate was so different in so many ways. You didn't have fresh lettuce all year round, but you did have it if you raised it in your garden and you went by seasons of what was available in the garden and locally raised. You didn't have as many things shipped in. As I remember as a child, citrus fruit was a great treasure. If a child got one orange in their stocking at Christmas time, that was an event. You didn't have oranges and I can well remember the first grapefruit I saw. Oh my, that was unusual; and it was a very sour one, too, and full of seeds.

BRUSKE: Where were they coming from?

D. DOERR: Undoubtedly from Florida. Because now that we are living in Florida, we see some of these trees that were producing way back then. The transportation and shipping wasn't as good.

BRUSKE: Were these things, then, made available at the store in town?

D. DOERR: Available, yes; but very scantily available. Very expensive. Very expensive because they were very rare. Other foods, meat, was used but not quite as freely as it is today. You had it when you butchered your animals and you made... I can well remember especially the hog butchering time; they did sometimes butcher the calves at home. As far as butchering steers, they didn't do that on our farm nor in the locality there that I knew about. Of course, the Chicago Stock Yards were in use then, by the time I grew up. I can remember just one occasion in my childhood of seeing what they called the meat wagons that drove around and had purveyed meat that they would stock up and sell it through the day to people. I don't remember that we ever purchased any of that; I can

imagine it was very unappetizing.

BRUSKE: Yes, I get from the tone of your voice that you didn't care much for it.

D. DOERR: I didn't care much for it. I saw when we were in Portugal and we went into a little village. I saw meat that looked as if it had been handled a great deal as the meat was in this wagon that came around. It was very unappetizing, not protected from flies or kept cold. Incidentally, we had no refrigerators, none were available. No ice was available.

BRUSKE: So the things that you ate, you went and got them out of the garden?

D. DOERR: Yes, it had to be either preserved with salt or heat. We did can things at that time. Salting things was very common. Salting the hams and bacon were all done there on the farm. Smoking the hams was done. We had a specially built smokehouse. My father was very strict about the type of wood that was used to smoke. You call your hickory-smoked hams. Well, hickory smoke is fine, but let me tell you that apple tree branches makes quite a different flavor, and is perfectly delicious. Not many people had apple trees. We had a big orchard. We had at least six varieties of apples and they were stored in the basement which is a cool, cool place. Incidentally, you speak of limestone; that had a natural lime-stone floor because it went down to that level. That kept cool all of the summer. The hams were cured down there. After they were smoked, they were cured and dried and then wrapped. I was telling Mrs. King that to keep them from being dried out too much, our family had a peculiar

technique of doing that. Instead of just depending on wrapping, they also put them in the oat bin, which was a very peculiar thing. I can remember as a child being sent out to feel down with my feet and find a ham and bring it into the house. It had been well wrapped and put in there because the oats stayed cool; and yet, it wouldn't dry out too much and get hard and it kept perfectly after it had been well cured. Those hams kept all year round. They were just marvelous food.

BRUSKE: Okay. I was going to ask you about the taste. You talked about salted hams, cured hams and all of this. What was the difference when you buy hams in the store?

D. DOERR: Every person had their own favorite technique of doing it. There was nothing written about it; you didn't follow a recipe for doing it. They were salted until you thought they were salted enough. Being the youngest in the family, I had no say about anything. I didn't even know about it, wasn't even informed about it. I can remember those racks and racks of hams being salted first and then they were smoked after they were salted.

BRUSKE: They had them hanging on the racks and then they threw salt on them?

D. DOERR: No, they were on great big shelves that were hung from the ceiling rafters of the first floor. And these were hanging shelves where no rodents could get at them, you see. Then they were carefully salted. Of course, they drained, the liquid of the raw ham draws out the liquid of the meat until it gets to a certain stage and a person has to be very intelligent to do that. Of course, I had nothing to do with deciding

how long those things hung. Your flavor of ham depended entirely on the person who was handling it. As I recall, it was very delicious, very tender, and not too salty. It wasn't like your Virginia hams that are dried next to bone texture. Have you ever had one of those?

BRUSKE: No, I haven't.

D. DOERR: They are very highly praised. But, they have to be boiled; and they have to be soaked, sometimes for six hours, to get moisture into them. They are so dried out, they are just completely dehydrated. Our hams were not. They were moist and tasty and not too salty. The flavor was good and they would keep. Even after they came out of this bin, they would keep for a long time, even without refrigeration. For keeping milk--milk was not delivered the way it is today--you didn't go to the store and buy it; you had no thing to put it in. In our farm they were a little more careful than most. They had piped the water from this deep well into--it was like a freezer--but it was just a tank that water would come in, go through the tank, go out way down through the ground, and out to the tank for the animals out near the barn. So you see, it was rather complex. Then we would put these cans down in this cold water and they would keep fine. It was a very advanced form of refrigeration. But that was the limit of our refrigeration. Down in the basement where it was cool, or in this cold water, was the only refrigeration.

BRUSKE: Did they do any kind of pasteurization?

D. DOERR: No. No pasteurization at all because you had fresh milk morning and night. You didn't need to pasteurize. When it got sour, then when it clabbered, you would make cottage cheese or you would throw it out to the

pigs, after it was skimmed. You skimmed the cream and the cream became sour, but not too sour, before you made it into butter. Sometimes we would milk as many as ten cows by hand morning and night. Usually not quite that many. So we had quantities of milk. And then the butter would be sold, and the butter and egg money was what the family fed on, the things they went to the store for. They would take their crocks of butter into town and sell them and buy the needed supplies.

BRUSKE: So it was kind of an exchange?

D. DOERR: Well, usually there was more money from what we took in than what we bought. Because we had a larger supply, but that was the spending money throughout the year. You see, the income would only be when they sold the grain. That was twice a year that we would have this income. In-between, unless you sold a calf or something of the sort.

BRUSKE: So it was just this money that you were making off the butter and eggs?

D. DOERR: The butter and egg money was a great deal of the money that was lived on by the family, and very little money was used.

BRUSKE: Were you buying your clothes in town?

D. DOERR: Oh no. Clothes were not ready-made. They were made by buying the fabric.

BRUSKE: You bought the fabric?

D. DOERR: Oh, I bought the fabric and made this dress. So I am taking advantage of my early training in sewing. I don't remember them making trousers, but I expect they did at one time. I don't even remember seeing

a dress on the market. They had yard goods, threads, needles, and they did have sewing machines, the treadle type. No electric lamps, only kerosene lamps. Laundry, /laughter/ that was the day! Talk about laundry day, if you got through getting things clean by noon, you were doing very well. The next day would be ironing day. How did you iron? Did you have an electric iron? Oh no. You had a flat iron. You put them on the stove. And no matter how hot the day, you had to have a roaring fire to heat the irons hot enough to iron these clothes.

BRUSKE: Did you make your own soap sometimes?

D. DOERR: Oh yes. Soap was not purchased in little boxes of flakes and what have you. It was made. You saved the fat and then mixed it up with the lye and so forth and made the soap. Of course, it was quite a technique to that. I must have been a very...

BRUSKE: Sheltered /laughter/.

D. DOERR: Well, "do-less" sort of part of the family. I was the youngest and unfortunately, I wasn't very well.

BRUSKE: You were ill?

D. DOERR: Oh, I was. Let's not get into that. It just happens that I was a great deal as a child.

BRUSKE: What happened when someone was ill?

D. DOERR: When someone was ill, doctors came to the house; but you had no telephone to get them. I remember when I was two years old and was desperately ill. I can still see the room in the house in town where I

was lying when I was that sick. But the other things I don't remember. We were taken to the doctor rarely. My mother had herbs that she used for medicines. Golly, did they taste terrible! They were simply awful, but they were effective. She had one particular lobilia that she swore took care of the entire digestive tract from the stomach on, regardless of anything. If you had any digestive difficulties, lobilia was the cure. I might say that lobilia tea either went up or down, depending on what was needed. If the stomach needed to be empty, it emptied it; if the other tract needed to be empty, it took care of that also. But it was a primitive type of care. We were eight miles from town and that was with an ordinary farm horse on the road. It was an hour and half drive to town and one only did that under... When I broke my arm, naturally I took the drive /laughter/. I started to tell you about the laundry, and that was so different. In the earliest days, of course, you had these round galvanized tubs that you used with a washboard and the laundry soap that you had made. You heated the water in a copper boiler on the stove and you used that water for washing and for rinsing; and if you were very fortunate, you had a hand-worked roller wringer. That was a development that I'm sure was not always available. It was either use your hands for wringing or that was the only thing available. Put them in this big tub of suds and scrub them.

BRUSKE: On the scrubbing board?

D. DOERR: On the washboard that is used more for musical instruments nowdays than for getting clothes clean. Then after they were washed and rinsed and this hand wringer thing that a basket in between the two tubs. We had a special bench for those two tubs and it gave good height. Then

a rack of some sort that had this roller wringer that went round and round. The wringers were about an inch around, I would say; and the rubber on those would wear out very quickly. Then it had a tilting board that tilted water back into the scrub water or into the rinse water. You better be sure to get that thing turned right or you get your suds back into the rinse water. You have to do that by hand. /Laughter/.

BRUSKE: Sounds like quite an operation.

D. DOERR: Oh, it was.

BRUSKE: How many people did you have working on that then?

D. DOERR: Maybe two. It all depends who was around. If there was one, one did it, period. You did what you had to do. You took it for granted that it had to be done. I can remember vividly the cherry picking time. Because I was the youngest and the smallest, I could get highest up in the tree. And picking cherries, /Laughter/ looking back on it, was fun. I didn't object to it then. I liked it much better than pitting the darn things after we got them picked.

BRUSKE: That was for canning?

D. DOERR: For canning, yes. Oh yes, we canned a great deal. Of course, the apples kept through the winter. We always had fresh apples. I can remember the bins and the different varieties. Now use up these first because they won't keep as long as this or that. But six varieties of apples, we had a wonderful...

BRUSKE: Are you saying you would make pies and...

D. DOERR: Pies or eat them raw, or anything like that. I mean just as you would use apples today. We didn't have delicious apples that you have. Some varieties we didn't have, but they were very lovely tasting apples. We enjoyed them. We had peaches. My father tells about when he was a child, they dried their peaches. Now when I was growing up, they didn't. They didn't bother. They had the canning, which they hadn't had when my father was young. So at that time, they dried the fresh peaches. We had fresh peaches to eat. You see, we had people found out the things they wanted and they didn't mind waiting until trees bore fruit to get it. Then we had the nuts that we would go out and get them. I remember at the place where the Illinois, you called it Dresden Heights then, that was the only place we could get Filberts, only we called them Hazel Nuts.

BRUSKE: Hazel nuts?

D. DOERR: Hazel nuts. Well, they're Filberts really.

BRUSKE: I think they call them hazel nuts now, don't they?

D. DOERR: Do they? They may, some people may. But that was the only place that we made a pilgrimage driving there to get Filberts.

BRUSKE: Wait a minute. Were you in an automobile, then driving?

D. DOERR: Automobile! Ye gods! We didn't have automobiles for years. I was out of high school. Our first automobile was in 1909. It was the first four-cylinder car.

BRUSKE: Then we are talking about a time period of, what, 1890's now?

D. DOERR: 1900 on. I don't think my memory goes, except for this illness

period and few outstanding things, I don't think my memory really remembers.

BRUSKE: Around 1900?

D. DOERR: 1900 on.

BRUSKE: Then you would all get into the wagon?

D. DOERR: Yes. Oh, we had double buggies with fringe on top yet. We had single buggies for one horse and just one seat. Then the doublebuggy, surrey, when you wanted to get the whole gang in. Sometimes, with our big family, we had to have two. But you had a lot of horses. It was wonderful.

BRUSKE: I'm getting a couple of questions that are coming up. First of all, I wanted to ask you, we have already talked about the foods and things, how would you compare the way people eat now and the way they did then? You talked about people not taking care of their bodies and people that had this big craze to eat natural foods.

D. DOERR: Naturally, our foods were very natural in those days. We did have rice that was imported. That was another thing that you bought at the store was rice because rice pudding was desirable. I would say they ate less fruit than they eat today at that time. They had fewer fresh vegetables. Celery was only known at a few times in the year and that had to be bought at the store. That was one thing we did buy at the store because we didn't raise it. But through the summer, we had varieties of vegetables. Then in the winter, all we had, of course, was what we could save, like parsnips and your carrots and your onions that could be

kept through the winter. We had those and then apples galore. Of course, apples, I think, are a very healthy food. In fact, my father, when he was living alone on the farm through the week, in order that we might be in town to be educated, he would say that if he had corn meal mush and milk and applesauce, he had a complete meal. He had his protein in the milk; in the corn there is a certain amount of protein, of course. That would make a meal for him many a time. It was simple feeding. And I recall, in the depression, I worked in welfare and I was telling a very extravagant man who said he couldn't possibly live on this and I told him about this menu; he didn't approve of that menu at all. He could live on that /laughter/. My father had done it. Of course, they had eggs, plenty; and used them a lot. They did not have salads, except in summer. In summer we had salads, but we didn't have a variety of dressings. Salad dressing was almost unknown in those days. Vinegar and a little oil, very little oil. Seasoned vinegar and you used your cucumbers, in salted vinegar; and you used those raw things. But I say it as I recall it. Do you remember having salads? Of course, he (Mr. Doerr) lived in Chicago. My husband lived in Chicago; he was born in Chicago. They had the advantage of having running water when he was a child.

H. DOERR: We had canned vegetables and preserves.

D. DOERR: We didn't have very many. We would buy canned peas, salmon.

BRUSKE: I mean, didn't you put up any of your garden products?

D. DOERR: No. The vegetables you couldn't because they wouldn't keep. Tomatoes, yes, because they are acid and they don't have to be taken to such high temperatures. But you take any beans, green beans, or even

peas, they require a higher temperature or a longer processing in order to make them keep. We didn't have that means of doing it..

BRUSKE: Okay. One of the things you mentioned before when we were talking, you mentioned your dress and making dresses and that; I got an idea of some of the things that you learned. Today they talk about women's liberation and making women do the same kinds of things that the men are doing. How were you trained or brought up to be a person? Were you taught just specific things, such as sewing or doing the housework and that, or were you brought into some of the other things which were going on?

D. DOERR: /laughter/ One year when we could get no hired men, I did a great deal of the hay mowing and the hay raking and helped with the hay making. When we had our first automobile, I was the mechanic. When my brother had to repair the binder, I was his little old helper who ran and got certain cotter pins a certain size. I was a mechanic on the outside and you did what was necessary. That was it. You didn't think, am I being suppressed, am I being overlooked, or downgraded. No, you did what was necessary to do. You were perfectly happy to be of use. As far as this women's lib, we have women's lib. We are women and we didn't expect the men to learn to sew, and they didn't object to do that at all /laughter/. Many of my sisters did not do the work that I did. I used to break all the colts to ride, and drive because that was needed. I loved doing it, just loved doing it. But it wasn't usual women's work. I just happened to be the sort who much preferred to do the outside things to the inside things. So I was outside bumming around, having a good time, but I wasn't a women's libber. The minute I got in the house from doing the outside things, Oh, set the table, do this, that! I did the women's work, too.

You did what was needed to be done. You felt part of humanity; you didn't feel degraded in the least. Women's Lib! It is just a thing that people don't have enough to think about, so they have to work something up to get excited about.

BRUSKE: You went to high school? Did all the girls?

D. DOERR: Oh, everyone, everyone went to high school.

BRUSKE: What happened to you after you left high school?

D. DOERR: Well, again illness kept me out. So I was out of school for a year and then being the last one, I said I think I would like to go to college and learn how to teach home economics, which I really wasn't fitted for because I wasn't excited about doing home economics work, but teachers were needed in home economics. I'm very delighted I did and I loved the food chemistry so I did. So I went on to college. I was the only fortunate one of the family to go to college.

BRUSKE: Where did you go?

D. DOERR: I first went to the University of Chicago for a year; then due to circumstances which are better left unmentioned, I transferred to the University of Illinois. And I'm so glad I did because I met my dear husband down there. I was graduated in Home Economics under Isabel Baver in 1914 and taught for one whole year before I was married. Then I haven't worked at it since because it isn't necessary in the home. But, education was a very important thing in our family and education beyond the formal education. Be interested in learning all your life. Education is not just for your youth. If you can't learn till you're 99, if you live to

be that old, you're out of luck. The Creator gave us a brain. He gave us that brain to use and if we don't use it, we are not doing what the Creator intended.

BRUSKE: Getting into a kind of philosophy, was religion and really getting down and talking and discussing a part of the home.

D. DOERR: Religion was living. My mother was a devout Baptist. Due to unfortunate circumstances in her home life that brought a death in the family, it developed that religious factor to try to endure that sorrow, that belief in the future life, which I think is real and wonderful. She was that sort of person. She believed in church going and being religious. My father, on the other hand, was an informal person to whom ritual did not mean anything very much. He was intrinsically a religious person. He never did anything cruel; he never did anything unkind; he was always helpful, always, in every way. When he was in the Civil War and became a sergeant, I can remember him telling before they went into battle. They were going into very vigorous battle the next day, Shiloh Hill I think it was that he told me.

BRUSKE: Was he in the battle of Shiloh?

D. DOERR: Yes. Oh, yes. Oh, he was in battles to no end. Vicksburg, his name is down there in Vicksburg as sergeant. He was made sergeant at the time. Of course, he didn't have formal education, so he wasn't an officer but he was sergeant of his company and he had the responsibility of giving out equipment and all that sort of thing. They were issued liquor, rum, to give the men courage to go into battle and he said, "Men, I don't know about you, and this isn't required, but if I am to meet my Maker tomorrow

I want to meet Him with my brain and my body intact", and took his liquor and poured it in the fire. Many of the men did. I don't know how many, but that was the kind of man he was; his religion was something he lived.

BRUSKE: Okay, he wasn't a church-goer, but he was very devout to his own philosophy?

D. DOERR: Devout. How anyone can be an atheist and live in this marvelous world, I cannot understand, because they are unaware of what is all around. He was so aware. He did all kinds of manner of testing in his contact with the growing things. He was just a remarkable person. Of course, being his daughter, naturally we all say that of our parents. I think that this was a little bit more than that because people in the neighborhood, when there were disputes, would come to him for the right settlement. I can remember, of course, we weren't in on those conferences when these men would come; but I can remember people coming to him and they would go into the parlor and talk. I can remember listening in, you know Big Ears, on the side, and he would say, "Well, I don't know what's right to do, but if it were me and I were doing it, I would do this." Then they would usually say, "Well, we will do that." But, I mean he was that sort of person; he was extremely well-rounded, even though he had no formal education.

BRUSKE: Did you experience any kinds of hardships or bad times during that period, as far as the family and maybe economics you might not have been too out of it?

D. DOERR: We weren't aware of it. I want to mention one thing, you men-

tioned clothing. If a person had three dresses at that time, they were adequately supplied with a wardrobe. There were few changes of garments. People didn't change their clothing every day. It was a matter that usually people wore their clothing for a week. Unless it got too /laughter/ dirty, then it was washed. You didn't have very many changes; we didn't, I should say. Now that probably would not hold for everybody. My mother wasn't interested in clothing; other things were more important to her than clothing was.

BRUSKE: As far as living on the farm, there weren't times when you were really hard-pressed for food to eat?

D. DOERR: We were never hard-pressed that I knew about and I'm sure there was always enough food because you could manage. And you did manage. There were always chickens that could be killed and eaten. There was, as I say, potatoes; you raised enough for your own supply for the year. You raised all those things...You get potatoes and chickens and apples, you have a meal. It isn't very imaginative, but it was adequate nutritionally. And milk, all the milk you could drink, and butter.

BRUSKE: What do you remember about things like the first world war or were they talking now a lot about the...

D. DOERR: The first world war, we are coming up to the time I was married. We were married at that time and our first child was due and so my husband didn't go to the war. But I can tell you this, that we went through the depression of the thirties when our children were at a very expensive age. My husband being an architect, architects had no work between 1925 and 1945.

H. DOERR: 1929.

D. DOERR: '29, I know; but that had started for most architects. You had work till 1929. But anyhow, we'll say '29 to '45, because no buildings were built. There were four years that there was absolutely no money coming in to their office. He and his brother had an office. We became desperate and the banks closed. We lost so much money in these banks that were closed, that we had nothing. We had to rent our house furnished and went back to the same old farm and took our three children and lived with my brother. He and his wife were very gracious and let us live there until he was able to find some work at the fair and so forth. Our children going through that period when I would say, "I'm sorry, no, I can't give you a nickel to go to the movies; we will have to have a loaf of bread instead." They remember that time as having the gayest time they ever had going down to the farm and living that different life than we had been living in Chicago. Going down to the farm and living that life was an experience that they relish to this day. It was odd. We didn't have money. We had troubles galore. And so I think this: if there were periods of time when they had very little money on the farm, we, as children, were unaware of the pinching.

H. DOERR: There is one thing I would like to say and that is, when the depression came, my wife, being used to the self-sufficiency of the work on the farm, was able to make do where other people would give up. This early training was one of the main reasons why we survived as we did. We didn't have to borrow a nickel from anybody during the depression. I was in debt, but that was because I owned stock on margin which we eventually paid off completely. Due to this early farm-life training, we were able to make do with other things that other people just did not understand because they didn't have that background of experience in obtaining basic

foods and doing without unnecessary things. This is largely what brought us through. Of course, we both had to dig in and work, but I don't mean that was the only thing. But it was a tremendous help, I would say. I got a job as a common laborer working for a dollar an hour. There were other architects that...

D. DOERR: That committed suicide.

H. DOERR: That were college graduates...

D. DOERR: That ran away, that deserted their families. It was a tragic time at that time, but we managed to get by.

H. DOERR: We survived. We kept going, that's the main thing.

BRUSKE: One of the big things, I don't know if I should get back to politics, but with this Watergate, they compare it to the Teapot Dome Scandal that happened. I was wondering if you would remember what the person around here might have remembered about Warren G. Harding and some of the scandal that might have happened with his administration?

H. DOERR: It is rather vague in my memory. We were so tied up with survival and personal economy, I never took much interest in politics. I knew Chicago politics were very substandard with the political party being run by what they called bosses, Hinky Dink and Bathhouse John. My father was a very good friend of a man who was elected as city treasurer and his name was Adam Wartsiphon. He was very strict and honest in his handling of the office. He told my father that, "I will never run for reelection because politics in Chicago are so dirty, I can't swallow all the things that they try to make me do." He just would have no part of it. I knew

from that first-hand information that there was a lot of crookedness going on.

D. DOERR: Honesty and morality seem to be on the wane and I feel that it is tragic that young people are not better grounded in the fundamental reverence for life and living.

BRUSKE: Back then, they refer to. They say that our youth they are doing all these rebellious things. When then they always say, well, look at the roaring twenties and all this. Well, you were pretty well-established. What did it look like to you, the people coming up?

H. DOERR: Every generation is rebellious as they come up. I was rebellious. I, at one time, thought I knew everything. I soon found out I didn't. I believe that each generation has to learn for himself the lessons of life and what is right.

D. DOERR: And they do.

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